

IN THE GLOAMING.

When the dusk is slowly creeping, shutting out the glare of day, When the evening star in beauty trembles with refulgent ray; When the violet's dewy fragrance subtly soothes the aching of pain— Then the mind turns inward, backward to the joys of youth again.

BROTHER JOE.

BY MARY M. BOYNTON.

Mrs. Field caught sight of him trudging at her husband's side, and her sewing fell to her lap as she leaned forward and intently scrutinized the young stranger. He appeared very small, and she wondered again if they had done a wise thing in giving the solicited country home to this orphaned child.

It had been with this possibility in mind as well as with a generous purpose that the Ohio farmer and his wife had responded to the appeal of the overcrowded orphan asylum in the neighboring city.

Now at her husband's approach, Mrs. Field rose, slipping her needle into her sewing. As she opened the door, she uttered a warning, "Rosamond is asleep," she said.

She laid a kindly hand on the boy's shoulder as she took his straw hat and small bundle. "So this is Joe," she said, with a smile.

Joe was absorbed in a vision of a just awakened child. Fair hair, curling closely from the pressure of the little head, circled a delicately beautiful face which gradually broke into a welcoming smile for the solemn boy gazing at her across the sunlit room.

"This is Joe, Darling," said the mother, placing the child upon her feet. "Won't you go and shake hands with him?" The usually shy child unhesitatingly advanced. "I'll show you the little chickies," she said. She clasped the boy's hand with her rose-like palm, and with the touch something was born into the lonely boy's heart.

In a few weeks the four years of Rosamond's life were, to her, as if they had never been. No baby memories could live in the present delight of life with a Joe whose somewhat stolid exterior covered unrivaled powers of entertainment and tireless devotion. When, in the fall, the district school claimed Joe, the happy hours were those in which his shaggy head reappeared over the brow of the hill; the chore-time, in which she trotted at his heels, and the evenings, when Joe was in turn dog, horse or "nice bear"—with mother and father smiling in response to childish glee.

Joe was twelve years old when, one day, standing at the kitchen baking-board, he suddenly put into words a fear which, for some time vaguely haunting him, had been given definite form and force on the preceding day.

"I'd feel like I couldn't stand it if ever she found out I wasn't her truly brother," he said. Joe's fear came from a childish taunt of the school ground: "He isn't your truly brother!" But to Rosamond the words had been empty.

"He is, too!" she had declared vehemently, clasping his sunburned hand, with a challenging lift of her little sunbonneted head.

Had the little fearful cloud from that day hanging in Joe's sky been apparent to all, it must have been lost sight of in the great shadow which, long hovering, now suddenly settled upon the country home.

"You will have Joe," the stricken man had said; and the words frequently repeated themselves to the woman struggling to keep the little home, to hold to retreating life, only for the sake of a helpless child. For it was Joe who had set the example of resuming daily duties on that day when it seemed as if all duties must cease; Joe, whose courageous whistling about his tasks brought the first answering heart note.

The most willing hands never performed the impossible, and when, on a summer day two years later, Rosamond clung sobbingly to Brother Joe as the only one left to her on earth, the debt on the small farm was one which covered its value.

To Joe, through words of kindly neighbors which he overheard by chance, there came a realization of life as it now stretched before himself and the little sister, and also a heart sickening fear. "For it seems there ain't a relation near at all, either

side," was said. "But Joe's such an unusually strong and good boy some farmer will, glad enough, give him a home; and Rosamond's such a pretty and sweet child that if she's put in the Orphan's Home she will be real well adopted."

Joe's heart beat fiercely in his throat, and in the sleepless midnight hours his boy heart and mind became those of a man.

Rosamond opened her eyes but to darkness when awakened by the touch of Joe's hand on her face.

"Rosamond," he whispered, "I've got to go away to—attend to some business, and maybe I won't be back till afternoon, but you stay right here and wait till I come."

"I will," murmured Rosamond, sleepily.

"You—you wait till brother comes!" Joe again turned with a break in his voice. "Don't let 'em take you—visiting to any one."

The June sun's earliest rays touched Joe as, six miles from the farm, he entered a busy manufacturing town, and coming to the first mill, took his stand patiently on the office step. He had been waiting an hour when the scrubwoman arrived with mop and pail.

"I've come to see if I can get a job here," he said. "Do you know whether they're short a hand?"

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Mrs. McNall. "Why, where are you from?"

"No wonder you've got a tuckered look," she said, when Joe had explained to the point he considered essential; and with her sympathies enlisted, kindly Mrs. McNall hurriedly interviewed a neighbor. "Seems they are unexpectedly short a boy," she said, "and I've spoken to the machine-tender for you."

Mrs. McNall—a widow who had been pensioned because of her husband's noble services in a mill fire—gave to the two children a motherly care which thrice the "board money" that Joe proudly laid in her hand each week could not have compensated for; and her thrifty fingers fashioned the dresses which caused Joe to inquire, with a boy's uncertainty, but with a rising elation, "I guess she looks about as well as any of 'em, don't she?"

No aspect of the little girl's life escaped Joe's solicitous watchfulness. He perused unflinchingly, if in secret, a monthly column of advice to mothers on the bringing up of children, and proposed for Rosamond a diet which Mrs. McNall rejected, in amazed indignation, as only fit for a two-year-old. The school reports were regularly examined and judiciously praised or commented upon with as much sternness as Joe could command when Rosamond's face was upraised for his verdict. While Joe, as a working man, did not attend the Sunday-school, yet in the Sunday afternoon walks which were the crowning delight of his life he closely catechized Rosamond as to the morning's lesson, and admonished her to abide unflinchingly by its teaching. On Sunday evenings Joe invariably occupied a rear pew of the church where he had acutely decided he could obtain the most lucid explanations of the duties of life.

Rosamond had for three years watched nightly from gate or window for her brother,—who had for two years proudly held his advanced position of "back-tender,"—when came the night that Joe for the last time passed through the turnstile of the mill.

The mill, in a financial crisis, had closed. Joe, as was his custom when he was troubled, walked long that night; but whatever his thoughts during the vigil, only steadfast courage was written on his face when, on the following morning, he kissed Rosamond and was off to "look for work."

"I'll look after her just exactly as if you were here, you can rest easy about that," Mrs. McNall said, answering an unspoken thought as Joe pressed all but a little of the money he had into her hand. The words were Joe's comfort during following days.

It was of no use to look for work in the panic-stricken town, and Joe searched to the north. Ten days later he entered the oil region of the state, and within an hour he stood, cap in hand, at a derrick asking his customary question.

In the twilight, Joe, whose size and strength were unusual for a boy of seventeen years, appeared a man to the driller eyeing him.

"I've got a tool-dresser here with a mashed thumb," the driller said. "You can help him out for the night, anyway."

"This was Joe's "start" in the oil-field. After a three months' apprenticeship—at hardly living wages, but that did not matter, as the little heard left behind still provided for Rosamond—Joe was a "tool-dresser, receiving the regular wages of three dollars a day. His hammer's swinging blows could hardly express the joy of heart which held but one sorrow, suggested in his reply to Rosamond's plea, "I can't have you with me now, Rosamond; you see I'm here and there and everywhere—but there's a good time coming!"

Joe had been for a year a proficient tool-dresser, when the largest oil-well of the region "came in" not a mile from Joe's station. A great boom was on. Men went wild; land was leased for miles about; drillers were at a premium, and in the stress Joe was given a chance for which he had hoped and prepared.

By the time Joe had successfully drilled three wells he was a recognized "driller" with pay of four dollars and a half a day. In a year Joe Field was known through-

Rheumatism

No other disease makes one feel so old. It stiffens the joints, produces lameness, and makes every motion painful. It is sometimes so bad as wholly to disable, and it should never be neglected.

M. J. McDonald, Trenton, Ont., had it after a severe attack of the grip; Mrs. Hattie Turner, Bolivar, Mo., had it so severely she could not lift anything and could scarcely get up or down stairs; W. H. Shepard, Sandy Hook, Conn., was laid up with it, was cold even in July, and could not dress himself.

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out the oil territory as "a mighty good driller—a mighty smart young fellow," and it was now that the current of Rosamond's life, flowing smoothly under Mrs. McNall's wise and watchful eyes, was suddenly changed.

It was early in September that Joe, taking the south-bound train that should carry him to Rosamond, found in a vacant seat a little book, bound in white and gold. He read it from cover to cover—then again. The prospectus of "The Elmdale School for Girls" had probably never before been so diligently studied. He gazed long at the views of the fine building, artistically furnished rooms, vistas of lawn, and longest at portraits of president and teachers and at groups of happy girl students.

As his journey drew to a close he reread the paragraph promising the genuine home influence, the faithful guidance of mind and heart "that shall make our daughters 'as corner stones.'" "That's the place for her," he said.

Fifteen-year-old Rosamond heard his plan and decision with tears which only Joe's presentation and eulogy of the little book could check. Her brother's great heart-pang came when the blue eyes smiled and a flush of happy excitement rose in the tear stained face, but his mind was made up; he was determined.

"She must be ready to start by September twelfth," he said, interviewing the principal dressmaker of the town. After an uncertain step toward the door, Joe turned to produce the white and gold book. "I ain't much on clothes," he said, "so I can't give you instructions, but here's the idea I want filled out."

The clever seamstress understood to the extent that when Rosamond, safely escorted, entered the doors of the "Elmdale School," her personal belongings entirely harmonized with her delicate beauty of face and form.

And Rosamond, crossing the threshold, none the less certainly stepped into "her place." The well known school had never sheltered one more innately suited to, perhaps unconsciously longing for, its simple grace of life; and never had a pupil won a place in the affections of instructors and gay-hearted companions more quickly than the orphaned child brought to the gates of girlhood and of the Elmdale School by Brother Joe.

"Brother Joe" became a romantic character to Rosamond's school friends. They pictured him as a patriarchal elder brother of perhaps twice Rosamond's age; and even Rosamond, as the years of her school life passed and Joe stood to her through all in the position of a father, came to look on him as much older than he really was. Indeed, the brief, business-like letters of Joseph Field to the head of the school gave no hint that they were written by one old only in responsibility and manly work accomplished.

Joe, in the three years had prospered. Attaining as a driller a degree of expertness that put him always in demand, he had, a year before Rosamond's graduation day, made a venture, the outcome of which had succeeded his greatest hopes.

Studying the land adjoining the recognized oil field, he had leased a hundred acres, not up to this time considered promising, and had awaited the widening of the field. When, in six months, good wells had appeared on either side of his land, Joe, by an offer of a half share in the lease, had secured a moneyed partner and had begun to sink the well which was—through his careful arrangement—to make him none the poorer, and perhaps far the richer. Notwithstanding the outward composure which characterizes the experienced field man, Joe's heart beat fast during the days when, under his skillful touch on the rope, the great tools forced their way to and through the rock. The moment the well proved "a gusher" of two hundred barrels a day, Joe's cap went into the air, and he gave a great exultant shout.

This meant the pretty home in the city near by, where he could have the little sister surrounded with comforts and luxuries, with motherly Mrs. McNall installed as housekeeper.

This was the picture in Joe's mind as—with his first thought for personal appearance, attired in what he considered the best—he was swiftly drawn toward the spot which held for him all dear upon earth. But one faint shadow was outlined in Joe's sunlit landscape. It lay in a letter Joe knew by heart—a sweet, girlish confession and plea to the big brother whose word was law. She did not ask it yet; first would come the happy home

life, so long hoped and planned for. But then! And then confident happy-heartedness! She knew he would approve of and like Arthur—the president's nephew, whom in her three years' continuous stay in the president's home she had grown to know so well. "But oh,"—to the delight of her gay heart,—"he is so afraid of you, Joe! He quakes at the thought of your verdict." And then at the close one little line which said to Joe's comprehending heart that the young sister's happiness was at stake.

"Well, if he's the right sort all through!" thought Joe in his final review, with both a sigh and a smile.

Two ladies and a girl student entered the car at the station next to that which was, for Joe, all important.

"I don't believe he is on the train," the young student said to the ladies, in an undertone that Joe heard. "And Rosamond will be so disappointed!"

Then Rosamond's love-story was sympathetically told by one of the ladies to her friend—and also to Joe. His face glowed at the praise of his sister, but a sudden weight of fear fell on his heart at the succeeding words. "She is evidently of as fine a family and as favored in fortune as the Dunlaps themselves, which must be gratifying to their pride. I understand her brother is a prominent oil man, and altogether the little romance has not a shadow upon it."

Joe heard no more. A new world was spread before him, in which—as he vaguely called to mind stories picturing society—young hearts were joined or broken according to the dictates of family pride. And he, in his ignorance and roughness, he suddenly saw himself as he must appear,—he represented his Rosamond's "family!"

Joe stumbled to his feet as the car stopped, and followed the unsuspecting speakers; then, as the train rushed on, he stood hesitatingly in the darkness surrounding the circle of light at the station.

"Oh, Rosamond," he heard the girl's clear voice say, "he didn't come! Not a soul got off but us and a working man—or boy rather."

Yes, there, at last, she was—the little sister! A very flower of girlhood in her trim white suit, with her fair hair curling out from under her sailor hat, and her face paling in disappointment, but smiling again at the assurance: "He will surely come in the morning."

Joe's pain was resolutely forced back that he might judge impartially the young man from whom the deep-toned assurance came.

Joe was satisfied. The little sister's happiness was safe in the keeping of the athletic young owner of that firm and pleasant face.

When Joseph Field's name was announced late that evening, the president of the Elmdale School rose from his desk stepped forward and stopped; not so much in surprise at the fact that the young man who had entered his library was little more than a boy, as at sight of that boy's face. It was tired and white.

"I'd like to have a few words with you, sir," said Joe, with the composure that he had gained in his walk of miles; and in his quiet voice he told the hitherto unknown facts of his own and Rosamond's life.

"It's been my one deep-lying fear," he said at last, "that she'd ever come to know I wasn't her brother. She—well, she was all I ever had, you see! And I've so far argued with myself that it was best, on her account, for her to think, and for others to think, that she had some one who had a real right to stand between her and a pretty hard world, but now, fearing—through some sudden knowledge I've come to—that my being, as you see, just a plain, hard-working man, might in some way act against her, I've come to state the facts to you, sir, hoping she'll not be affected now that it's known just how it stands; for she, Rosamond herself, comes of a very fine family, sir." Joe leaned forward anxiously.

"While I can't tell you much," he continued, "I know that her father had been a teacher once, and her mother—only child, orphaned like her—was a minister's daughter in the East; and I guess they don't find 'em much finer than that, teachers and preachers, do they? When it comes to fortune, sir, I guess she might hold her own even now, with a good many of 'em; for while right here, I give up all claim of belonging to her,—give her to them and the life she's suited to,—yet her claim's good on me for all I've got. I'm nothing to her, but she's my little sister to me as long as life lasts—God bless her!"

The president, who had at first sunk to his chair in uncomprehending amazement, rose and held out his hand.

"Why, my boy!" he said, "why, my boy! It is an honor to shake your hand!"

But the slender figure who, wide eyed and trembling, had stood at the door, was running swiftly across the room to sob, as of old, on Joe's comforting breast.

"O Joe, I—we—were there, and c—u—ldn't help hearing! O Joe, say again that I'm always to be your sister! I can't live if it isn't to be just as it always has been!"

And then there was another hand for the bewildered Joe to grasp—a hand offered with the deference accorded only to heroes.

"If," the young fellow was saying hesitatingly, "if it could be that—after a while—you could give her to me, and feel hit instead of loing her, you had—f—unt a brother—"

"Why," said Joe, choking in his helpless joy, "if you don't mind having me—"

Rosamond clung to him, murmuring! "Dearest, dearest Joe!" "Nephew-in-law," said the president, putting his kind hand on the big fellow's shoulder, "you'll stay with us to-night,"

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